

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SEOUL 08118 121001Z

ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 SS-15 NSCE-00 USSS-00 SY-05

CPR-02 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 VO-05 CA-01 INRE-00

SSO-00 /064 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3452

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 8118

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR BGEN OVIP

SUBJ: CHANGE OF FOREIGN MINISTER'S TRAVEL PLANS

REF: A. SEOUL 8051, B. STATE 230334

1. PRIOR TO RECEIPT REFTEL (B), ON OCCASION OF AMBASSADOR'S SPEECH TO KOREAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION EVENING SEPT. 11, KUSEC CHAIRMAN PARK CHOONG HOON RAISED MATTER OF FONMIN'S CHANGED TRAVEL PLANS WITH AMBASSADOR AND FONMIN PARK TONG JIN. PARK CHOONG HOON SAID HE WOULD CALL BLUE HOUSE NEXT DAY IN EFFORTS AT LEAST TO GET FONMIN'S SCHEDULED OCT. 1 DEPARTURE FROM US DELAYED FOR ONE OR TWO DAYS IN HOPES THAT USKEC COULD RESCHEDULE DINNER FOR EITHER EVENING OCTOBER 1 OR 2. AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT, IN ADDITION TO PROBLEMS SUCH RESCHEDULING WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY CAUSE IN TERMS OF SHIFTING BUSY SCHEDULES OF BUSINESS LEADERS PLANNING TO ATTEND, POSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES IN RESERVING BANQUET ROOM FOR RESCHEDULED DINNER, ETC., THERE WAS STRONG LIKELIHOOD THAT ASST. SEC. HOLBROOKE WOULD BE UNABLE TO ADJUST TO CHANGED SCHEDULE.

2. EMBOFF TELEPHONED MOFA AMERICAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR GENERAL YOO CHUNG HA SEPT. 12, DESCRIBING PREVIOUS EVENING'S CONVERSATION, AND GAVE HIM SUBSTANCE OF REFTEL. YOO SAID HE WOULD
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 SEOUL 08118 121001Z

INFORM FONMIN, BUT STRESSED THAT LATTER'S DECISION TO CHANGE TRAVEL PLANS HAD NOT BEEN MADE LIGHTLY, THAT HIS PRESENCE AT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WAS REGARDED AS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. EMBOFF SUBSEQUENTLY TALKED TO PARK CHOONG HOON AND INFORMED HIM OF CONVERSATION WITH MOFA. HE SAID HE HAD CONTACTED BLUE HOUSE AND URGED FONMIN'S ORIGINAL OCT. 4 SCHEDULE FOR SPEECH BE MAINTAINED. CHAIRMAN PARK SAID KUSEC HAD CABLED

USKEC TO ASK ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF RESCHEDULING DINNER, BUT HAD RECEIVED NO REPLY. HE SAID HE WOULD CONTACT MINISTER PARK'S OFFICE AGAIN AND PROMISED TO KEEP EMBASSY INFORMED OF ANY DEVELOPMENTS.

3. YOO TELEPHONED BACK AT COB SEPT. 12, AFTER TALKING WITH FONMIN. SAID FONMIN HAD DISCUSSED MATTER WITH KOREAN COUNSUL GENERAL IN NEW YORK ON PHONE YESTERDAY, AND WAS WELL AWARE OF INTENSITY OF DESIRE OF US BUSINESSMEN, AND APPRECIATES THE EFFECT OF DINNER CANCELLATION. NEVERTHELESS, THE PRIME MINISTER WANTS HIM BACK, AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WILL NOT BE SATISFIED WITH ANYONE LESS THAN THE FOREIGN MINISTER. SAID FONMIN REGRETS THE NECESSITY OF CHANGING SCHEDULE, AND WOULD BE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY OTHER FUNCTIONS WHILE HE IS IN NEW YORK, BUT HE HAD NOT ANTICIPATED THIS DEVELOPMENT AT THE TIME HE ACCEPTED THE INVITATION TO SPEAK.

4. COMMENT: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HAS BEEN VERY DIFFICULT IN RECENT SESSIONS OVER ABSENCE OF MINISTERS. THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN COMMITTEES REFUSED TO MEET UNTIL APPROPRIATE MINISTER APPEARED. FONMIN WAS CAUSE FOR ONE SUCH DELAY. GIVEN POSTURING THAT IS EXPECTED IN PREPARATION FOR DEC. ELECTION, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IS EXPECTED TO BE EVEN MORE DIFFICULT THIS SESSION AND BLUE HOUSE CLEARLY WANTS TO AVOID UNNECESSARY FRICTION. CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 SEOUL 08118 121001Z

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